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## FURNISHING OF COUNTRY HOUSES.

BY RALPH A. CRAM.

## NUMBER THREE—THE VESTIBULE.

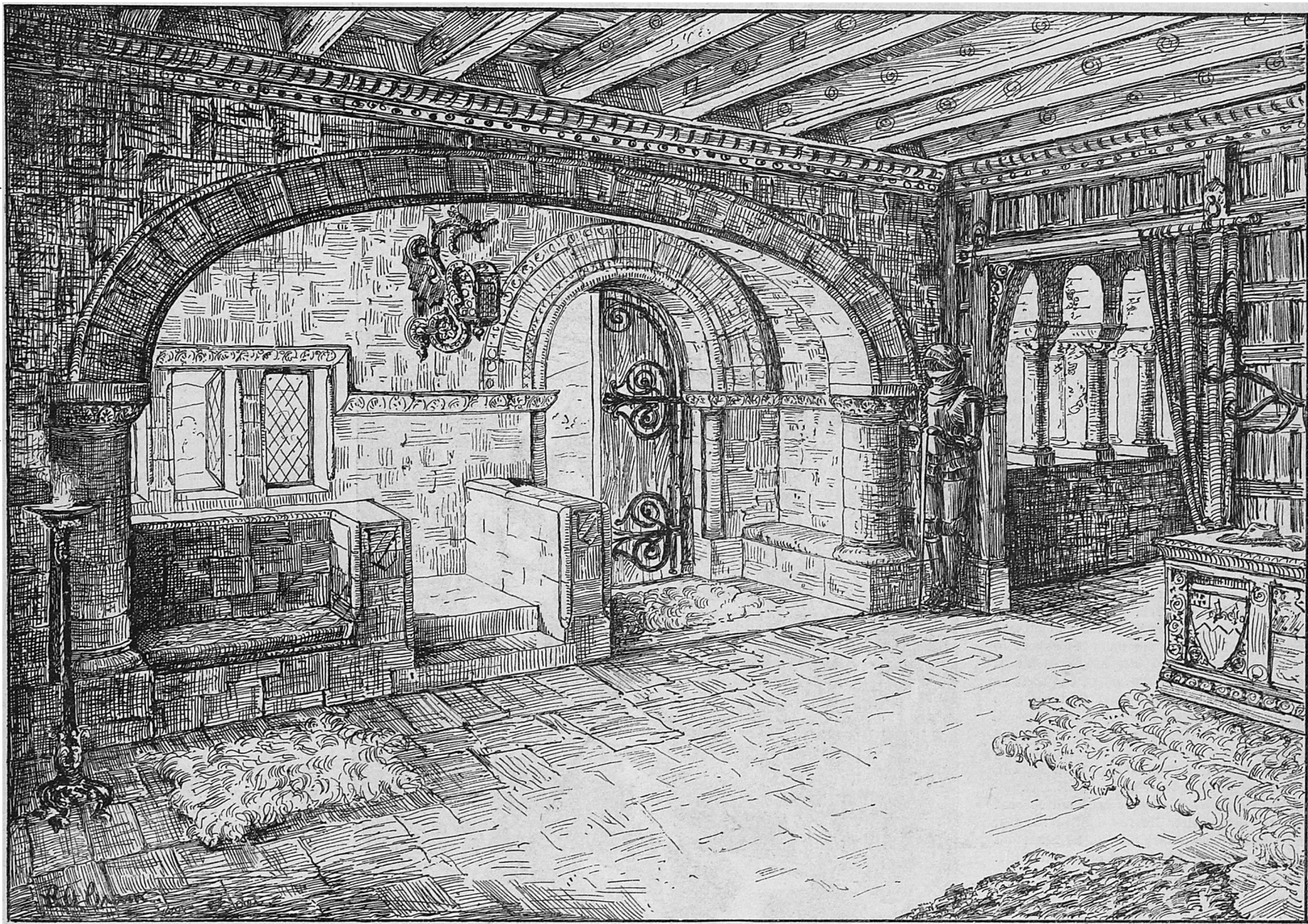
MR. CRAM proposes to contribute a series of articles on the Furnishing and Decoration of Country Houses, to be continued in consecutive numbers.—(ED.)

IN my last paper I said a few words in regard to the vestibule, but a room as important as this, and one which exercises so marked an influence over the rest of the house, is most certainly deserving of a more lengthy notice. Until recently a section cut from the end of the entrance hall was considered quite sufficient, and was so, as far as usefulness is concerned, but "beauty is just as useful as utility," and, therefore, this arrangement is quite out of the question in this period, when to be fashionable one must be artistic. Let us see, then, what are the requirements of a vestibule which shall be satisfactory both artistically and usefully. Now that the hall is becoming more of a living room, a vestibule is an absolute necessity in order that the cold drafts shall be interrupted, and

massive door of solid oak, heavily mounted with wrought iron, the visitor finds himself in a little stone room, cool and dim in summer, with the wind creeping in through the little casement windows, shaded by drooping vines, in front is the broad door to the hall, and instead of the ordinary door of wood, a heavy portiere is suspended from a rod and brackets of carved oak; at the right is a little stone stairway, winding up to join the grand stairway which rises from the hall. Down this stairway comes a ray of sunshine shed from the great windows far above. On the left, a long arcade of stone arches extends along the front of the house, and communicate with the reception room. These arches are wreathed with vines in summer, and in winter are filled in with windows of diamond paned glass, thus forming a sunny, cloister-like promenade.

The decoration of this room is plain and dignified and partakes strongly of the character of the exterior of the house. The stairway is of stone of a dull red color, and is solid and plain. All of the stonework, including the floor, is of the same color; then, as the woodwork is of oak stained a deep red brown, the general tone, although not

The stonework is confined to the floor and outside wall and its adjuncts, and the effect is, therefore, substantial in the extreme. The inside walls are covered with oak wainscot, the panels of which are carved in "beautiful linen" folds so often met with in old English work. The carving, with this exception, is confined to the door and the brackets which support the portiere. In the door opening to the passage is hung a large Persian mat, the tone of which is blue green of a very dark shade, and in the door to the hall is hung a square of Bayeux tapestry, the rich luminous colors giving a warm gloam in this room, naturally somewhat sombre. The chest on the right of the sketch is of carved oak mounted with wrought iron and steel, and is of very ancient date; above it hangs a pair of antlers—a most excellent substitute for the ordinary absurd hat stand. Of course a deer's antlers covered with stove pipe hats would have somewhat the appearance of a new departure, but it is greatly to be hoped that these ridiculous head dresses will soon be seen only on St. Patrick's Day, the only time when they are appropriate. In summer the cold stone floor is peculiarly grateful, but in winter it may be covered with rugs and



The Vestibule.

that visitors shall be secured from the occupants of the sitting-room.

Shelter is obviously the first impression a vestibule should give; warmth and coziness do not belong exactly to this part of the house, and the effect will be more satisfactory if these qualities are confined to the living rooms, and the vestibule left more architectural and massive, although never on any account forbidding, for welcome is one of the most desirable qualities in this room, through which all the visitors must pass. Although mottoes of the ordinary description are to be avoided, yet the cheery "Salve" of the Roman houses is a greeting which is extremely pleasing when seen first by the guest.

Here the decoration should be strictly constructional; all decorations should be so, of course, but here the construction and carpeting may be more plainly indicated than in those rooms where an impression of comfort is indispensable.

In the following sketch a great stone arch shelters the doorway, which is entered directly from a broad stone terrace, a very charming feature of a country house, and one which is unfortunately rarely found in America. Entering through a

positively warm, is yet sufficiently so to preclude any possibility of a feeling of chill or inhospitality.

It is unfortunate that stone has found its way into modern houses only in the shape of white marble mantels and marble topped tables. White marble is very beautiful in itself, and is highly ornamental and appropriate in a palace where the rooms are not lived in, but in a country cottage it is extremely cold and inharmionious. But it is unnecessary to condemn this atrocity, for under the influence of modern writers, the public has as a general thing come to see how incongruous a marble mantel and a woolen carpet are. Or, is it because wooden mantels are fashionable that marble has been condemned?

But to return to the subject from which we have unwittingly strayed. As will be noticed the general character of the sketch is massiveness and solidity; there is no veneering, no graining, no paper put on the walls to cover the cracks, or carpets on the floor to hide bad constructions. The floor is of solid slabs of sandstone; the walls are of stone or heavy wood paneling; the ceiling is formed of everlasting oak timbers, not pine joists sheathed with oak, as is the common practice.

skins, which are as warm as anything that can be devised. At night the room is lighted by a lamp of wrought iron, made in Florence in those days when true artists worked in iron and the more humble metals. In one corner stands a slender wrought iron lamp of Venetian design, on which a little perfumed flame is continuously burning. In the opposite corner stands a suit of armor, recalling the days when men-at-arms stood at the entrance of the castle. By the wall opposite the entrance stand two pieces of old carved oak furniture, one an armoire of French design, and the other a carved seat from Florence. On the walls hang trophies of arms, and in one corner stands a Chinese vase of engraved bronze. Thus it will be seen that, although the construction is massive in the extreme, and the decoration somewhat severe, the general effect is, nevertheless, hospitable and useful.

Why not have moveable reflectors over gas jets in picture rooms and galleries, so the light may be thrown upon any point required at the moment? This would enable us to judge many meritorious works that are often in obscure places.